

**MINUTES OF TOURISM, ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
MEETING - WEDNESDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2021**

**Present:**

Councillor Jackson (in the Chair)

Councillors

Burdess	Collett	Kirkland	Wilshaw
G Coleman	Galley	Walsh	

**In Attendance:**

Councillor Mrs Maxine Callow JP, Scrutiny Lead Member  
Mr Scott Butterfield, Strategy, Policy and Research Manager  
Mr Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration  
Mrs Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager  
Ms Vikki Piper, Head of Housing  
Mr Philip Welsh, Head of Tourism and Communication

**1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Paula Burdess and Paul Galley declared personal interests in item 8 'Illuminations Update', the nature of the interest that they were Non-Executive Directors at Blackpool Transport Services Limited.

**2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 6 OCTOBER 2021**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 6 October 2021 were agreed as a true and correct record.

**3 PUBLIC SPEAKING**

There were no applications from members of the public to speak on this occasion.

**4 EXECUTIVE AND CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS**

The Committee noted the Executive and Cabinet Member decisions taken since the previous meeting.

**5 FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee considered the Forward Plan 'December 2021 – March 2022' and queried the approach being taken to the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy. In response, Councillor Williams, Leader of the Council advised that a balanced approach had been taken to risk and that the Council was awaiting the outcome of the financial settlement to determine future spending. Mr Alan Cavill, Director of Communications and Regeneration added that it was expected that interest rates would remain low in the short term following the discovery of the Omicron variant and that when they started to rise they would do so slowly allowing for informed decision making. It was noted that the

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question would be forwarded to the Director of Resources following the meeting for any additional response.

## **6 CLIMATE EMERGENCY UPDATE**

Mr Scott Butterfield, Strategy, Policy and Research Manager presented the Climate Emergency Update to Committee and noted that regular updates would be provided every six months on progress made and that it was of key importance that Scrutiny Members were engaged in climate action.

The Committee queried the uptake among Ward Members of real Christmas trees and it was agreed that a response would be provided following the meeting as exact figures were not known.

Members noted the importance of attending training on the climate emergency and encouraged their colleagues to prioritise attendance. Mr Butterfield reported that the climate training sessions would be held as flexibly as possible to encourage all Members to attend and make attendance as easy as possible.

In response to further questions, Mr Butterfield reported that Blackpool had the highest proportion of emissions attributable to housing in Lancashire. He noted that a national review was being undertaken that would likely amend housing standards so that future new homes must meet certain climate standards.

The Committee agreed that a response on the uptake among Ward Members of real Christmas trees be provided following the meeting.

## **7 HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS ANNUAL REPORT**

Ms Vikki Piper, Head of Housing presented the Housing and Homelessness Annual Report to Committee and updated Members on the completion of the Supported Housing Scrutiny Review and draft standards for supported housing. She advised Members that the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol had been triggered due to the recent bad weather and would remain in place until the end of March 2022. It was also reported that the Council had recently won the Council of the Year Award at the UK Housing Awards.

Members queried the potential costs to the Council of the Foxhall Village site. In response, Ms Piper reported that it was too early in the process to determine potential cost and that work was ongoing in conjunction with Great Places in order to make the site safe and secure and to identify the course of action to take. She added that open areas in the development would be retained and that there was no intention to provide more properties on the site.

In relation to rough sleepers, the Committee noted the number from outside of Blackpool and requested additional information regarding the demographic of those identified as rough sleepers and the action the Council took when identifying a new rough sleeper. In response, Ms Piper advised that the number of rough sleepers in Blackpool was seasonal and that some from outside of the area came to Blackpool during the tourist season with the expectation of finding a job. She added that the number of people concerned was

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very low and that the Council did try to encourage them to return to their home town, if appropriate. It was noted that the latest Council count had identified 15 rough sleepers, however, the number was awaiting independent verification by Homeless Link. The count took place in the middle of the night to ensure an accurate total and a further breakdown of the demographics of those identified could be provided in writing following the meeting.

Members noted the work carried out by My Blackpool Home and queried whether any data could be provided to demonstrate the impact of the Company on anti-social behaviour and the wider positive impact on residents. In response, Ms Piper reported that anecdotally there was evidence that the Company was having a positive impact, however, the scale of the Company was not yet large enough to provide evidence of an impact on neighbourhoods. She added that My Blackpool Home would be contacted to request whether any data could be provided that demonstrated a social impact at this stage.

In reference to the recommendations made from the Housing and Homelessness Scrutiny Review, it was queried what progress had been made in refreshing the 'Alternative Giving' programme. Ms Piper responded to advise that a new board had been established to review the programme with the Lived Experience Team represented in order to provide additional perspective. She added that the refreshed programme would be launched in the near future and agreed to take back the suggestion to incorporate demonstrating how the money had been spent and the value added by the programme to the marketing approach.

The Committee went on to consider private housing standards and it was noted that regulation around private housing was very limited. Ms Piper added that the Council continued to press the Government for improved standards and regulation and provided the example of the supported housing pilot scheme as an outcome of this pressure.

It was noted that Lumen Housing was a registered provider and a subsidiary company of Blackpool Housing Company Limited. Ms Piper advised that Lumen, as a registered provider, must operate independently to the Council. Members requested that further information regarding the purpose and role of Lumen be provided.

The Committee and the Leader of the Council noted their congratulations to the Housing Team on their award of Council of the Year and commended the progress made on housing and homelessness in Blackpool in recent years.

The Committee agreed:

1. To receive a further breakdown of the demographics of those identified as rough sleepers in writing following the meeting.
2. To receive any data available on the social impact of My Blackpool Home (Blackpool Housing Company Limited).
3. That it be considered that the marketing approach for 'Alternative Giving' incorporate demonstrating how the money had been spent and the value added by the programme.
4. To receive further information regarding the purpose and role of Lumen Housing Limited.

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## **8 ILLUMINATIONS UPDATE**

Mr Philip Welsh, Head of Tourism and Communications presented the report to Committee and advised that since the publication of the report initial feedback had been received on 'Lightpool' which had been very positive. He noted that 84,000 visits had been recorded to those that were measurable spaces. He added that the Leader of the Council had also agreed to extend the Illuminations by an additional two months in 2022, as the positive impact on the town of the extension had been significant this year.

Members of the Committee congratulated everyone involved in the production of the Illuminations in 2021, commenting that it had been a remarkable year. It was queried whether local businesses had contributed to the costs this year and in response, Mr Welsh noted that it had been a challenging year financially for many businesses with lengthy closures due to the pandemic. He added that the Council had identified the need to 'kick start' the economy by investing in the tourism sector and that commercial investment and sponsorship would be a key focus in the following year.

It was noted that engagement with local residents had improved and that many now saw the events and opportunities on offer in the town as being for themselves as well as tourists. Members also felt that a positive could be taken from the pandemic, in that it had forced people to think differently about the provision of services. The example of the Illuminations Switch On event was discussed in detail and it was recognised that the virtual switch on had proved incredibly popular.

## **9 CAR PARKING SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT**

Mr Philip Welsh, Head of Tourism and Communication presented the Car Parking Services Annual Report to the Committee and highlighted that the performance of the car parks had been very positive since the removal of restrictions and that the good performance had continued through to November and early December 2021. He noted that the positive picture could be seen in use of the tram, coach visits and footfall in the town.

Members commended the positive performance and focussed on enforcement as an area for potential improvement. In response to questions, Mr Welsh advised that there had been an inability to recruit enforcement officers, however, positions had now been filled. He added that it had been a challenging year with unusual customer behaviour resulting in a number of people parking in unacceptable places such as around the tramway on the Promenade.

It was suggested that it would be helpful to receive an indication of capacity in future reporting to allow an understanding of the most popular areas for parking, any pressure points and whether any capacity could be added in certain areas. Councillor Mark Smith, Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Job Creation reported that research demonstrated that people wanted 'doorstep' parking and that they were willing to pay more to park close to their final destination. He added that new car parks were being considered as was the access to existing car parks such as Banks Street.

In response to questions regarding potential park and ride schemes, Mr Welsh noted that this had been piloted previously and had not been very successful partly due to the

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pricing strategy, but different options were being explored. However, it was reported that for the Ride the Lights event many had chosen to park in the car park identified in order to cycle the Promenade together. Mr Welsh reiterated the importance of enabling people to park close to where they wanted to be and of appropriate pricing.

**10 SCRUTINY WORKPLAN**

The Committee agreed its workplan and noted the updates to previous recommendations.

**11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Committee noted the date and time of the next meeting as Wednesday, 2 February 2022.

**Chairman**

(The meeting ended at 7.15 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:  
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